

*Diane di Prima*

# **Revolutionary Letters**

**May 1968-December 1971**

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dedicated to Bob Dylan

## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE:**

This version published 2005 without permission, and is based on the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the work by City Lights.

Anti-profit, anti-copyright.

Revolutionary Letters has been out of print for many years, and we wanted to bring it back.

Look for an expanded edition, rumored to come out soon from Last Gasp Press of SF.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #1**

I have just realized that the stakes are myself  
I have no other  
ransom money, nothing to break or barter but my life  
my spirit measured out, in bits, spread over  
the roulette table, I recoup what I can  
nothing else to shove under the nose of the maitre de jeu  
nothing to thrust out the window, no white flag  
this flesh all I have to offer, to make the play with  
this immediate head, what it comes up with, my move  
as we slither over this go board, stepping always  
(we hope) between the lines

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #2**

The value of an individual life a credo they taught us  
to instil fear, and inaction, 'you only live once'  
a fog in our eyes, we are  
endless as the sea, not separate, we die  
a million times a day, we are born  
a million times, each breath life and death:  
get up, put on your shoes, get  
started, someone will finish

//

Tribe

an organism, one flesh, breathing joy as the stars  
breathe destiny down on us, get  
going, join hands, see to business, thousands of sons  
will see to it when you fall, you will grow  
a thousand times in the bellies of your sisters

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #3

store water; make a point of filling your bathtub  
at the first news of trouble: they turned off the water  
in the 4<sup>th</sup> ward for a whole day during the Newark riots;  
or better yet make a habit  
of keeping the tub clean and full when not in use  
change this once a day, it should be good enough  
for washing, flushing toilets when necessary  
and cooking, in a pinch, but it's a good idea  
to keep some bottled water handy too  
get a couple of five gallon jugs and keep them full  
for cooking

//

store food — dry stuff like rice and beans stores best  
goes farthest. SALT VERY IMPORTANT: it's health and energy  
healing too, keep a couple pounds  
sea salt around, and, because we're spoiled, some tins  
tuna, etc. to keep up morale — keep up the sense  
of 'balanced diet' 'protein intake' remember  
the stores may be closed for quite some time, the trucks  
may not enter your section of the city for weeks, you can cool it indefinitely

//

with 20 lb brown rice  
20 lb whole wheat flour  
10 lb cornmeal  
10 lb good beans — kidney or soy  
5 lb sea salt  
2 qts good oil  
dried fruit and nuts  
add nutrients and a sense of luxury  
to this diet, a squash or coconut  
in a cool place in your pad will keep six months.

//  
remember we are all used to eating less  
than the 'average American' and take it easy  
before we  
ever notice we're hungry the rest of the folk will be starving  
used as they are to meat and fresh milk daily  
and help will arrive, until the day no help arrives  
and then you're on your own.

//  
hoard matches, we aren't good  
at rubbing sticks together any more  
a tinder box is useful, if you can work it  
don't count on gas stove, gas heater  
electric light  
keep hibachi and charcoal, CHARCOAL STARTER a help  
kerosene lamp and candles, learn to keep warm  
with breathing  
remember the blessed American habit of bundling

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #4**

Left to themselves people  
grow their hair.  
Left to themselves they  
take off their shoe's.  
Left to themselves they make love  
sleep easily  
share blankets, dope & children  
they are not lazy or afraid  
they plant seeds, they smile, they  
speak to one another. The word  
coming into its own: touch of love;  
on the brain, the ear.

//  
We return with the sea, the tides  
we return as often as leaves, as numerous  
as grass, gentle, insistent, we remember  
the way,  
our babes toddle barefoot thru the cities of the universe.

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #5

at some point  
you may be called upon  
to keep going for several days without sleep:  
keep some ups around, to be  
clearheaded, avoid 'comedown' as much as possible,  
take vitamin B along with amphetamines, try  
powdered guarana root, available  
at herb drugstores, it is an up  
used by Peruvian mountainfolk, tastes  
like mocha (bitter) can be put in tea  
will clear your head, increase oxygen supply  
keep you going past amphetamine wooziness

//

at some point  
you may have to crash, under tension, keep some downs  
on hand, you may have to cool out  
sickness, or freak-out, or sorrow, keep some downs  
on hand, I don't mean  
tranquillizers, ye olde fashioned SLEEPING PILL  
(sleep heals heads, heals souls) chloryll hydrate  
(Mickey Finn) one of the best, but  
nembutal, etc. OK in a pinch, remember  
no liquor with barbiturates

//

at some point  
you will need painkillers, darvon  
is glorified shit, stash some codeine & remember  
it's about five times more effective  
if taken with aspirin

//

ups, downs & painkillers are  
the essence: antibiotics  
for extreme infections, any good  
wide-spectrum one will do, avoid penicillin  
too many allergies, speaking of which  
cortisone is good for really bad attacks  
(someone who freaks out asthma-style, or with hives)

//

USE ALL THESE AS LITTLE  
as possible, side effects multifarious  
and they cloud the brain  
tend to weaken the body and obscure  
judgment

//

ginseng tea, ginger compresses, sea salt,  
prayer and love  
are better healers, easier come by, save the others  
for life and death trips, you will know  
when you see one

## **REVOLUTIONARY NOTE #6**

avoid the folk  
who find Bonnie and Clyde too violent  
who see the blood but not the energy form  
they love us and want us to practice birth control  
they love us and want the Hindus to kill their cows  
they love us and have a colorless tasteless powder  
which is the perfect synthetic food . . .

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #7**

there are those who can tell you  
how to make molotov cocktails, flamethrowers,  
bombs whatever  
you might be needing  
find them and learn, define  
your aim clearly, choose your ammo  
with that in mind  
//  
it is not a good idea to tote a gun  
or knife  
unless you are proficient in its use  
all swords are two-edged, can be used against you  
by anyone who can get 'em away from you  
//  
it is



possible even on the east coast  
to find an isolated place for target practice  
success  
will depend mostly on your state of mind:  
meditate, pray, make love, be prepared  
at any time, to die

//

but don't get uptight: the guns  
will not win this one, they are  
an incidental part of the action  
which we better damn well be good at,  
what will win  
is mantras, the sustenance we give each other,  
the energy we plug into  
(the fact that we touch  
share food)  
the buddha nature  
of everyone, friend and foe, like a million earthworms  
tunnelling under this structure  
till it falls

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #8**

Everytime you pick the spot for a be-in  
a demonstration, a march, a rally, you are choosing the ground  
for a potential battle.

You are still calling these shots.

Pick your terrain with that in mind.

Remember the old gang rules:

stick to your neighborhood, don't let them lure you  
to Central Park everytime, I would hate  
to stumble bloody out of that park to find help:  
Central Park West, or Fifth Avenue, which would you  
choose?

//

go to love-ins  
with incense, flowers, food, and a plastic bag  
with a damp cloth in it, for tear gas, wear no jewelry  
wear clothes you can move in easily, wear no glasses

contact lenses  
earrings for pierced ears are especially hazardous  
//  
try to be clear  
in front, what you will do if it comes  
to trouble  
if you're going to try to split stay out of the center  
don't stampede or panic others  
don't waver between active and passive resistance  
know your limitations, bear contempt  
neither for yourself, nor any of your brothers  
//  
NO ONE WAY WORKS, it will take all of us  
shoving at the thing from all sides  
to bring it down.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #9**

advocating  
the overthrow of government is a crime  
overthrowing it is something else  
altogether, it is sometimes called  
revolution  
but don't kid yourself: government  
is not where it's at: it's only  
a good place to start:  
1. kill head of Dow Chemical  
2. destroy plant  
3. MAKE IT UNPROFITABLE FOR THEM to build again.  
i.e., destroy the concept of money  
as we know it, get rid of interest,  
savings, inheritance  
(Pound's money, as dated coupons that come in the mail  
to everyone, and are void in 30 days  
is still a good idea)  
or, let's start with no money at all and invent it  
if we need it  
or, mimeograph it and everyone  
print as much as they want

and see what happens

//

declare a moratorium on debt  
the Continental Congress did  
'on all debts public and private'  
& no one 'owns' the land  
it can be held  
for use, no man holding more  
than he can work, himself and family working

//

let no one work for another  
except for love, and what you make above your needs be given to the tribe  
a Common-Wealth

//

None of us knows the answers, think about  
these things.  
The day will come when we have to know  
the answers.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #10**

These are transitional years and the dues  
will be heavy.  
Change is quick but revolution  
will take A while.  
America has not even begun as yet.  
This continent is seed.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #11**

drove across  
San Joaquin Valley  
with Kirby Doyle  
grooving  
getting free Digger meat  
for Free City Convention  
grooving  
behind talk of Kirby's family  
been here a long time

grooving  
friendship renewed, neat pickup truck, we stopped  
at a gas station  
man uptight at the  
sight of us, sight of Kirby's hair, his friendly  
loose face, my hair, our dress  
man surly, uptight, we drove  
away brought down  
(across fields of insecticide and migrant workers)  
and  
'Man' I said  
'that cat  
so uptight, what's he  
so uptight about, it's not  
your hair, not really, it's just  
what the TV tells him about hippies  
got him scared, what he reads in  
his magazines  
got him scared, we got to  
come out from behind the image  
sit down with him, if he  
sat down to a beer with you he'd find  
a helluva lot more to say than he'll find  
with the man who makes your image  
he's got nothing in common  
with the men who run his mind, who tell him  
what to think of us'  
//  
SMASH THE MEDIA, I said,  
AND BURN THE SCHOOLS  
so people can meet, can sit  
and talk to each other, warm and close  
no TV image flickering  
between them.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #12**

the vortex of creation is the vortex of destruction  
the vortex of artistic creation is the vortex of self destruction

the vortex of political creation is the vortex of flesh destruction  
flesh is in the fire, it curls and terribly warps  
fat is in the fire, it drips and sizzling sings  
bones are in the fire  
they crack tellingly in  
subtle hieroglyphs of oracle  
charcoal singed  
the smell of your burning hair  
for every revolutionary must at last will his own destruction  
rooted as he is in the past he sets out to destroy

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #13**

now let me tell you  
what is a Brahmasastra  
Brahmasastra, hindu weapon of war  
near as I can make out  
a flying wedge of mind energy  
hurled at the foe by god or hero  
or many heroes  
hurled at a problem or enemy  
cracking it  
//  
Brahmasastra can be made  
by any or all  
can be made by all of us  
straight or tripping, thinking together  
like: all of us stop the war  
at nine o'clock tomorrow, each take one soldier  
see him clearly, love him, take the gun  
out of his hand, lead him to a quiet spot  
sit him down, sit with him as he takes a joint  
of viet cong grass from his pocket . . .  
Brahmasastra can be made  
by all of us, tripping together  
winter solstice  
at home, or in park, or wandering  
sitting with friends  
blinds closed, or on porch, no be-in

no need  
to gather publicly  
just gather spirit, see the forest growing  
put back the big trees  
put back the buffalo  
the grasslands of the midwest with their herds of elk and deer  
put fish in clean Great Lakes  
desire that all surface water on the planet  
be clean again. Kneel down and drink  
from whatever brook or lake you conjure up.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #14**

are you prepared  
to hide someone in your home indefinitely  
say, two to six weeks, you going out  
for food, etc., so he never  
hits the street, to keep your friends away  
coolly, so they ask no questions, to nurse  
him, or her, as necessary, to know  
'first aid' and healing (not to freak out  
at the sight of torn or half-cooked flesh)  
to pass him on at the right time to the next  
station, to cross the Canadian border, with a child  
so that the three of you  
look like one family, no questions asked,  
or fewer, to stash letters, guns, or bombs  
forget about them  
till they are called for, to KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT  
not to 'trust'  
even your truelove, that is,  
lay no more knowledge on him than he needs  
to do his part of it, a kindness  
we all must extend to each other in this game

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #15**

When you seize Columbia, when you  
seize Paris, take

the media, tell the people what you're doing  
what you're up to and why and how you mean  
to do it, how they can help, keep the news  
coming, steady, you have 70 years  
of media conditioning to combat, it is a wall  
you must get through, somehow, to reach  
the instinctive man, who is struggling like a plant  
for light, for air

//

when you seize a town, a campus, get hold of the power  
stations, the water, the transportation,  
forget to negotiate, forget how  
to negotiate, don't wait for De Gaulle or Kirk  
to abdicate, they won't, you are not  
'demonstrating' you are fighting  
a war, fight to win, don't wait for Johnson or  
Humphrey or Rockefeller, to agree to your terms  
take what you need, 'it's free  
because it's yours'

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #16**

we are eating up the planet, the New York Times  
takes a forest, every Sunday, Los Angeles  
draws its water from the Sacramento Valley  
the rivers of British Columbia are ours  
on lease for 99 years

//

every large factory is an infringement  
of our god-given right to light and air  
to clean and flowing rivers stocked with fish  
to the very possibility of life  
for our children's children, we will have to  
look carefully, i.e., do we really want/  
need  
electricity and at what cost in natural resource  
human resource  
do we need cars, when petroleum  
pumped from the earth poisons the land around

for 100 years, pumped from the car  
poisons the hard-pressed cities, or try this  
statistic, the USA  
has 5% of the world's people uses over  
50% of the world's goods, our garbage  
holds matter for survival for uncounted  
'underdeveloped' nations

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #17**

we will all feel the pinch  
there will not be  
a Cadillac and a 40,000 dollar home  
for everyone  
simply  
the planet will not bear it  
//  
What there will be is enough  
food, enough  
of the 'necessities', luxuries  
will have to go by the board  
//  
even the poorest of us  
will have to give up something  
to live free

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #18**

let's talk about splitting, splitting is an art  
frequently called upon in revolution  
retreat, says the I Ching, must not be confused  
with flight, and furthermore, frequently, it furthers  
ONE TO HAVE SOMEWHERE TO GO  
//  
i.e., know in advance  
the persons/place you can go to,  
means to get there  
keep money (cash) in house for travelling  
an extra set of i.d., Robert Williams



was warned by his own TV set when the Man  
was coming for him,  
he had his loot at home, his wife and kids  
all crossed the country with him, into CANADA  
and on to CUBA

//

it's a good idea  
to have good, working transportation 'wheels', one friend  
has two weeks stashed in his VW bus  
food, water, matches, clothing, blankets, gas, he can go  
at least that long, before he hits a town, can leave  
at any time  
something to think about . . .

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #19

(for The Poor People's Campaign)  
if what you want is jobs  
for everyone, you are still the enemy,  
you have not thought thru, clearly  
what that means

//

if what you want is housing,  
industry (G.E. on the Navaho reservation)  
a car for everyone, garage, refrigerator,  
TV, more plumbing, scientific  
freeways, you are still  
the enemy, you have chosen  
to sacrifice the planet for a few years of some  
science fiction Utopia, if what you want

//

still is, or can be, schools  
where all our kids are pushed into one shape, are taught  
it's better to be 'American' than black  
or Indian, or Jap, or PR, where Dick  
and Jane become and are the dream, do you  
look like Dick's father, don't you think your kid  
secretly wishes you did

//

if what you want  
is clinics where the AMA  
can feed you pills to keep you weak, or sterile  
shoot germs into your kids, while Mercke & Co  
grows richer  
if you want  
free psychiatric help for everyone  
so that the shrinks  
pimps for this decadence, can make  
it flower for us, if you want  
if you still want a piece  
a small piece of suburbia, green lawn  
laid down by the square foot  
color TV, whose radiant energy  
kills brain cells, whose subliminal ads  
brainwash your children, have taken over  
your dreams  
//  
degrees from universities which are nothing  
more than slum landlords, festering sinks  
of lies, so you too can go forth  
and lie to others on some greeny campus  
//  
THEN YOU ARE STILL  
THE ENEMY, you are selling  
yourself short, remember  
you can have what you ask for, ask for  
everything

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #20**

(for Huey Newton)  
I will not rest  
till men walk free & fearless on the earth  
each doing in the manner of his blood  
& tribe, peaceful in the free air  
//  
till all can seek, unhindered  
the shape of their thought

no black cloud fear or guilt  
between them & the sun, no babies burning  
young men locked away, no paper world  
to come between flesh & flesh in human  
encounter

//

till the young women  
come into their own, honored & fearless  
birthing strong sons  
loving & dancing

//

till the young men can at last  
lose some of their sternness, return  
to young men's thoughts, till laughter  
bounces off our hills & fills  
our plains

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #21**

Can you  
own land, can you  
own house, own rights  
to other's labor, (stocks, or factories  
or money, loaned at interest)  
what about  
the yield of same, crops, autos  
airplanes dropping bombs, can you  
own real estate, so others  
pay you rent? to whom  
does the water belong, to whom  
will the air belong, as it gets rarer?  
the american indians say that a man  
can own no more than he can carry away  
on his horse.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #22**

what do you want  
your kids to learn, do you care

if they know factoring, chemical formulae, theory  
of numbers, equations, philosophy, semantics  
symbolic logic, latin, history, socalled, which is  
merely history of mind of western man, least interesting  
of numberless manifestations on this planet?

//

do you care  
if he learns to eat off the woods, to set  
a broken arm, to mend  
his own clothes, cook simple food, deliver  
a calf or baby? if there are cars should he not  
be able to keep his running?  
how will he learn these things, will he learn them  
cut off in a plaster box, encased  
in a larger cement box called 'school' dealing with paper  
from morning till night, grinding no clay or mortar, no  
pigment, setting no seedlings in black earth  
come spring, how will he  
know to trap a rabbit, build a raft,  
to navigate by stars, or find safe ground  
to sleep on? what is he doing all his learning years  
inside, as if the planet were no more than a vehicle  
for carrying our plastic constructs around the sun

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #23**

A lack of faith is simply a lack of courage  
one who says 'I wish I could believe that' means simply that he  
is coward, is pleased  
to be spectator, on this scene where there are no spectators  
where all hands not actually working are working against  
as they lie idle, folded in lap, or holding up newspapers  
full of lies, or wrapped around steering wheel, on one more  
pleasure trip

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #24**

Have you thought about the American aborigines  
who will inhabit

this continent? Cave dwellers, tent people, tree dwellers, will your  
great-grandchildren be among them? Will they sell  
artifacts—abalone or wool—to the affluent  
highly civilized Africans  
who come here in the summer, will they wear  
buckskin, or cotton, loincloth, run down  
deer, catch fish barehanded, build teepees, hogans, remember  
to use the wheel, to write, to speak, or simply drum & pipe,  
smiling, will your great-grandchildren be among them?

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #25**

Know every way  
out of your house, where it goes, every alley  
on the block, which back yards connect, which walls  
are scalable, which bushes  
will hold a man.  
Construct at least one man-sized hiding place  
in your walls, know for sure which neighbors  
will let you sneak in the back door & saunter out the front  
while the man is parked in your driveway, or tearing  
your pad apart, which neighbors won't be home, which cellar doors  
are open—whom you can summon in your neighborhood  
to do your errands, check the block, set up  
a getaway while you sit tight inside & your house  
is watched. . .

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #26**

'DOES THE END  
JUSTIFY THE MEANS?' this is  
process, there is no end, there are only  
means, each one  
had better justify itself.  
To whom?

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #27**

How much

can we afford to lose, before we win, can we  
cut hair, or give up drugs, take  
job, join Minute'Men, marry, wear their clothes,  
play bingo, what  
can we stomach, how soon  
does it leave its mark, can we  
living straight in a straight part of town still see  
our people, can we live  
if we don't see our people? 'It is better  
to lose & win, than win & be  
defeated' sd Gertrude Stein, which wd you  
choose?

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #28**

O my brothers  
busted for pot, for looting, for loving  
young beautiful brothers & sisters, for holding out hope  
in both hands to the Man, enraging him  
O my brothers, freaking out this moment this beautiful summer evening  
in all the cages of America  
while the sun goes down on this fabled & holy land:  
//  
know that we have this land, we are filling its crevices  
its caves and forests, its coastlines and holy places  
with our mating flesh, with the fierce play of our children our numbers increas-  
ing  
we are approaching your cells, to cut you loose  
to march triumphant with you, crying out  
to Maitreya, across the Pacific

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #29**

beware of those  
who say we are the beautiful losers  
who stand in their long hair and wait to be punished  
who weep on beaches for our isolation  
//  
we are not alone: we have brothers in all the hills

we have sisters in the jungles and in the ozarks  
we even have brothers on the frozen tundra  
they sit by their fires, they sing, they gather arms  
they multiply: they will reclaim the earth

//

nowhere we can go but they are waiting for us  
no exile where we will not hear welcome home  
'goodmorning sister, let me work with you  
goodmorning brother, let me  
fight by your side'

### **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #30**

(To Those Who Sold the Revolution Summer of '68)  
remember to wear a hat, if you have a hat  
and stick your hair inside it, if it's long hair  
or don't, wear shoes if it's snowing and you have shoes  
remember they buy out all the leaders, be a leader  
if you want to be bought out, but remember to  
tell the truth, just before they buy you, tell the truth  
loud, and the kids will hear you, not hear your money  
as it falls on the liquorstore counter, day after day  
not hear your dreams of nightmare betrayal and torture  
not hear your mercedes, they'll hear the truth you spoke  
they'll believe you and honor you after you die, brought down  
by that cia bullet you can't avoid just by taking their money  
they'll believe you and DO WHAT YOU SAY  
NOT WHAT YOU DO

### **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #31**

(for LeRoi, at long last)  
not all the works of Mozart worth one human life  
not all the brocaded of the Potala palace  
better we should wear homespun, than some in orlon  
some in Thailand silk  
the children of Bengal weave gold thread in silk saris  
six years old, eight years old, for export, they don't sing  
the singers are for export, Folkways records

better we should all have homemade flutes  
and practice excruciatingly upon them, one hundred years  
till we learn to  
make our own music

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #32**

not western civilization, but civilization itself  
is the disease which is eating us  
not the last five thousand years, but the last twenty thousand  
are the cancer  
not modern cities, but the city, not  
capitalism, but ism, art, religion, once they are  
separate enough to be seen and named, named art named  
religion, once they are not  
simply the daily acts of life which bring the rain, bring bread, heal, bring  
the herds close enough to hunt, birth the children  
simply the acts of song, the acts of power, now lost  
to us these many years, not killing a few white men will bring  
back power, not killing all the white men, but killing  
the white man in each of us, killing the desire  
for brocade, for gold, for champagne brandy, which sends  
people out of the sun and out of their lives to create  
COMMODITY for our pleasure, what claim  
do we have, can we make, on another's time, another's  
life blood, show me  
a city which does not consume the air and water  
for miles around it, mohenjo-daro was a blot  
on the village culture of India, the cities of Egypt sucked  
the life of millions, show me  
an artifact of city which has the power  
as flesh has power, as spirit of man  
has power

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #33**

how far back  
are we willing to go?"that seems to be  
the question, the more we give up



the more we will be blessed, the more  
we give up, the further back we go, can we  
make it under the sky again, in moving tribes  
that settle, build, move on and build again  
owning only what we carry, do we need  
the village, division of labor, a friendly potlatch  
a couple of times a year, or must it be  
merely a 'cybernetic civilization'  
which may or may not save the water, but will not  
show us our root, or our original face, return  
us to the source, how far  
(forward is back) are we willing to go  
after all?

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #34**

hey man let's make a revolution, let's give  
every man a thunderbird  
color TV, a refrigerator, free  
antibiotics, let's build  
apartments with a separate bedroom for every child  
inflatable plastic sofas, vitamin pills  
with all our daily requirements that come in the mail  
free gas & electric & telephone &  
no rent, why not?

//

hey man, let's make a revolution, let's  
turn off the power, turn on the  
stars at night, put metal  
back in the earth, or at least not take it out  
anymore, make lots of guitars and flutes, teach the chicks  
how to heal with herbs, let's learn  
to live with each other in a smaller space, and build  
hogans, and domes and teepees all over the place  
BLOW UP THE PETROLEUM LINES, make the cars  
into flower pots or sculptures or live  
in the bigger ones, why not?

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #35

rise up, my  
brothers, do not  
bow your heads any longer, or pray  
except to the spirit you waken, the  
spirit you bring to birth, it  
never was on earth, rise up, do not  
droop, smoking hash or opium, dreaming sweetness, perhaps  
there will be time for that, on the long beaches  
lying in love with the few of us who are left, but now  
the earth cries out for aid, our brothers  
and sisters set aside their childhoods, prepare  
to fight, what choice have we but join them, in their hands  
rests the survival of the very planet, the health  
of the solar system, for we are one  
with the stars and the spirit we forge  
they wait for, Christ, Buddha, Krishna  
Paracelsus, had but a taste, we must reclaim  
the planet, re-occupy  
this ground  
the peace we seek was never seen before, the earth  
BELONGS, at last, TO THE LIVING

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #36

who is the we, who is  
the they in this thing, did  
we or they kill the Indians, not me  
my people brought here, cheap labor to exploit  
a continent for them, did we  
or they exploit it? do you  
admit complicity, say 'we  
have to get out of Vietnam, we really should  
stop poisoning the water, etc.' look closer, look again,  
secede, declare your independence, don't accept  
a share of the guilt they want to lay on us  
MAN IS INNOCENT & BEAUTIFUL & born  
to perfect bliss they envy, heavy deeds

make heavy hearts and to them  
life is suffering, stand clear.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #37**

GEOGRAPHY, U.S.A.  
the east edge is  
megalopolis, is  
Washington, D.C., spread out  
800 miles, ecology  
totally fucked up, even  
the brothers there do not completely believe  
that they can win; the west edge  
is langorous w/wealth, there venison  
is brought down from the hills & figs & wine  
from abandoned orchards, the sisters  
raise their bastard young on welfare checks & rotten  
sprayed vegetables, talk 'free', talk end of money, for them  
the war is over, all the wars; the middle  
is hardly heard from yet, it is  
stirring, stretching muscles, bare bones of continent, eternal'  
progression of young barbarians  
huge boiling meat-fed hordes who can't be taught  
there's anything to lose, angelic herds whose unholy yell  
is gonna shake us all

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #38**

NOT PEOPLE'S PARK  
PEOPLE'S PLANET, CAN THEY  
FENCE THAT ONE IN, BULLDOZE IT  
4 A.M.?

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #39**

let me tell you, brothers, that on May 30<sup>th</sup> I went to one of our  
life festivals  
dropped acid in Tompkins Square Park with my

brothers & sisters  
danced in the sun, till the stars  
came out & the pigs  
drove around us in a circle, where we stood  
touching each other & loving, then I  
went home & made love like a flower, like two flowers opening  
to each other, we were  
the jewel in the lotus, next morning still high wandered uptown  
to Natural History Museum & there  
in a room of Peruvian fauna, birds  
of paradise I saw as a past, like the dinosaurs  
saw birds pass from the earth &  
flowers, most trees & small creatures:  
chipmunks & rabbits & squirrels & delicate wildflowers  
saw the earth bare & smooth, austere plastic & efficient  
men feeding hydroponically, working like ants  
thought flatly, without regret (I have unlearned  
regret)  
'WHAT BEAUTIFUL CREATURES  
USED TO LIVE ON THE EARTH'

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #40**

if the power of the word is anything, America, your oil fields  
burning  
your cities in ruins, smouldering, pillaged by children  
your cars broken down, at a standstill, choking the roads  
your citizens standing beside them, bewildered, or choosing  
a packload of objects (what they can carry away) if the  
power of the word lives, America, your power lines down  
eagle-eyed lines of electric, of telephone, towers  
of radio transmission  
toppled & rankling in the fields, setting the hay ablaze  
your newspapers useless, your populace illiterate  
wiping their asses with them,  
IF THE WORD HAS POWER YOU SHALL NOT STAND  
AMERICA, the wilderness is spreading from the parks  
you have fenced it into, already  
desert blows through Las Vegas, the sea licks its chops

at the oily edges of Los Angeles,  
the camels are breeding, the bears, the elk are increasing  
so are the indians and the very poor  
do you stir in your sleep, America, do you dream of your power  
pastel colored oil tanks from sea to shining sea?  
sleep well, America, we stand by your bedside,  
the word has power, the chant is going up

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #41**

Revolution: a turning, as the earth  
turns, among planets, as the sun  
turns round some (darker) star, the galaxy  
describes a yin-yang spiral in the aether, we turn  
from dark to light, turn  
faces of pain & fear, the dawn  
awash among them

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #42**

what is this  
'overpopulation' problem, have you  
looked at it, clearly, do you know  
//  
ten times as much land needed if we eat  
hamburger, instead of grain; we can  
all fit, not hungry, if we minimize  
our needs, RIP OFF LARGE, EMPTY RANCHES, make the food  
nutritious: chemical fertilizers  
have to go, nitrates  
poison the water; large scale machine farming  
has to go, the soil  
is blowing away (300 years  
to make one inch of topsoil), do you know  
//  
40% of the women of Puerto Rico  
already sterilized, transistor radios  
the 'sterilization bonus' in India; all propaganda  
aimed at the 'non-white' and 'poor white' populations

//  
something like 90% of the land of USA  
belongs to 5% of the population:  
how can they hold on  
when the hordes of the infants of the very poor  
grow up, grow strong

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #43**

'I dreamed of a world without the sick and the fat'  
– Yevtushenko  
the map: first goal is health  
strong bodies make strong spirit, Venceremos Brigade  
coming back from Cuba discover they know how to breathe  
they can get up with the sun; first thing:  
to zap the sugar habit, get rid of meat  
& heavy drugs, to eat no chemicals, no processed food  
first step:  
to find out what health feels like: even keel  
tireless energy pouring steady through  
//  
then, prana (vital energy) moving smooth  
thru all yr flesh: next goal release  
sex force–strong flesh becomes bright flesh  
anger becomes 'Buddha's anger' a steady roar  
righteous, behind yr action, not spasmodic, threatens  
no self-destruction; loose touch on  
brothers & sisters, loose force (& contain it)  
Holy Power  
to build up, or pull down

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #44**

(for my sisters)  
As we know that blood  
is birth, agony  
breaks open doors, as we  
can bend, graciously, beneath burdens, undermine  
like rain, or earthworms, as our cries

yield to the cries of the newborn, as we hear  
the plea in the voices around us, not words  
of passion or cunning, discount  
anger or pride, grow strong  
in our own strength, women's alchemy, quick arms  
to pull down walls, we liberate  
out of our knowledge, labor, sucking babes, we  
liberate, and nourish, as the earth

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #45

And it seems to me the struggle has to be waged  
on a number of different levels:

//

they have computers to cast the I Ching for them  
but we have yarrow stalks  
and the stars  
it is a battle of energies, of force-fields, what the newspapers  
call a battle of ideas

//

to take hold of the magic any way we can  
and use it in total faith  
to seek help in realms we have been taught to think of  
as 'mythological'  
to contact ALL LEVELS of one's own being  
& loose the forces therein  
always seeking in this to remain psychically inconspicuous  
on the not so unlikely chance  
that those we have thought of as 'instigators'  
are just the front men for a gang of black magicians  
based 'somewhere else' in space  
to whom the WHOLE of earth is a colony to exploit  
(the 'Nova Mob' not so far out as you think)

//

Best not to place bodies in the line of fire  
but to seek other means: study the Sioux  
learn not to fuck up as they did—another ghost dance  
started on Haight Street in 1967  
We ain't seen the end of it yet

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #46

And as you learn the magic, learn to believe it  
Don't be 'surprised' when it works, you undercut  
your power.

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #47

TO BE FREE we've got to be free  
of any idea of freedom.  
Today the State Dept lifted the ban on  
travel to China; and closed  
Merritt College.

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #48

Be careful.  
With what relief do we fall back  
on the tale, so often told in revolutions  
that now we must  
organize, obey the rules, so that later  
we can be free. It is the point  
at which the revolution stops. To be carried forward  
later & in another country, this is  
the pattern, but we can  
break the pattern  
//  
learn now we see  
with all our skin, smell with our eyes too  
sense & sex are boundless & the call  
is to be boundless in them, make the joy  
now, that we want, no shape  
for space & time now but the shapes we will

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #49

Machinery: extended hands of man  
doing man's work. Diverted rivers



washing my clothes, diverted fire  
dancing in wires, making light;  
and heat. To see it thus is to see it, even  
diverted rivers must resume their course, and fire  
consume, whatever name you call it.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #50**

As soon as we submit  
to a system based on causality, linear time  
we submit, again, to the old values, plunge again  
into slavery. Be strong. We have the right to make  
the universe we dream. No need to fear “science” grovelling  
apology for things as they are, ALL POWER  
TO JOY. which will remake the world.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #51**

Don't give up the eleven o'clock news for  
Chairman Mao, don't switch  
from one “programming” to another  
hang loose, Mao was young  
fifty years ago, & in China.

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #52**

SAN FRANCISCO NOTE  
I think I'll stay on this  
earthquake fault near this  
still-active volcano in this  
armed fortress facing a  
dying ocean &  
covered w/dirt  
while the  
streets burn up & the  
rocks fly & pepper gas  
lays us out  
cause

that's where my friends are,  
you bastards, not that  
you know what that means  
//  
Ain't gonna cop to it, ain't gonna  
be scared no more, we all  
know the same songs, mushrooms, butterflies  
we all  
have the same babies, dig it  
the woods are big.

### **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #53**

HOW TO BECOME A WALKING ALCHEMICAL EXPERIMENT  
eat mercury (in wheat & fish)  
breathe sulphur fumes (everywhere)  
take plenty of (macrobiotic) salt  
& cook the mixture in the heat  
of an atomic explosion

### **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #54**

It takes courage to say no  
//  
No to canned corn & instant  
mashed potatoes. No to rice krispies.  
No to special K. No to margarine  
mono & di-glycerides, NSDA  
for coloring, causing cancer. No to  
white bread, bleached w/nerve gas (wonder  
bread). No to everything fried  
in hardened oil w/silicates. No to  
once-so-delicious salami, now red  
w/sodium nitrate.  
//  
No to processed cheeses. No  
no again to irradiated bacon, pink  
phosphorescent ham, dead plastic  
pasteurized milk. No to chocolate pudding

like grandma never made. No thanx  
to coca-cola. No to freshness preserves,  
dough conditioners, no  
potassium sorbate, no  
aluminum silicate, NO  
BHA, BHT, NO  
di-ethyl-propyl-glycerate.

//

No more ice cream? not w/embalming fluid.  
Goodbye potato chips, peanut butter, jelly, jolly  
white sugar! No more DES  
all-American steaks or hamburgers either!  
Goodbye, frozen fish! (dipped & coated w/  
aureomycin) Fried eggs over easy w/  
hormones, penicillin & speed.  
Goodbye, frozen fish! (dipped & coated w/  
Carnation Instant Breakfast, Nestle's Quik.  
Fritos, goodbye! your labels are very confusing.

//

All I can say  
is what my daughter age six once said to me:  
"if I can't pronounce it  
maybe I shouldn't eat it."  
or, Dick Gregory  
coming out of a 20-day fast:  
"the people of America are controlled  
by the food they eat"

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #55**

All thru Amerika  
all I see & find is  
Indian America  
the forms & shapes of  
Great-Turtle-Island

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #56**

The forms proliferate.

As we spin (further) from the light  
our bodies sprout new madnesses  
congenital pale disease, like new plants  
on the edge of (radioactive) craters  
we sprout new richness of design  
baroque apologies for Kaliyuga  
till Kether calls us home  
hauls in the galaxies like some  
big fish.

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #57

### NOTES TOWARD AN AMERICAN HISTORY

Over & over I've look for  
the picture in the cloth: man  
standing idle & tall against  
horizon: "savage" landscape  
we stare, poverty-struck  
at New England pewter in  
farmhouse window: quote  
Adams, Jefferson, hew  
map of the sacred meadow  
//  
this was the  
land we were promised,  
wasnt it? is Fresno  
new Jerusalem? where  
is Dallas? how wd Olson/  
Pound/Tom Paine explain  
Petaluma. Over & over Kirby Doyle  
mad  
tells tale of his grandfather walking out  
of the desert  
his wife & two sons waiting in a wagon  
(he had the mule)  
& the boats  
in Gloucester, Newfoundland & Greece  
(the same)  
the wood

carved in Alaska & New Guinea . . .  
Over & over we seek that savage man  
sufficient & generous; we find  
Rockefeller, Nixon;  
sad letters of Jefferson  
mourning the ravaging of moundbuilders' land  
requesting his daughter not to neglect her French.  
We; over & over; seeking line & form  
gold-leaf as in Sienna  
"outline" as Blake  
we sit on shifting ground  
at the edge of this ocean  
"as far from Europe as you can get"  
& watch the hills flicker like dreamskin

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #58

What we need to know is laws of time & space  
they never dream of. Seek out  
the ancient texts: alchemy  
homeopathy, secret charts  
of early Rosicrucians (Giordanisti).  
Grok synchronicity Jung barely  
scratched the surface of.  
LOOK TO THE "HERESIES" of EUROPE FOR  
BLOODROOT  
(remnants of pre-colonized pre-Roman Europe):  
Insistent, hopeful resurgence of communards  
free love & joy; "in god all things are common"  
secret celebration of ancient season feasts & moons.  
Rewrite the calendar.  
//  
Head-on war is the mistake we make  
time after time  
There is a way around it, way to outflank  
technology, short circuit  
"energy crisis": retreat & silence  
cunning  
courage & love

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #59

Look to the cities, see how “urban renewal”  
tears out the slums from the heart of town  
forces expendable poor to the edges, to some  
remote & indefensible piece of ground:  
Hunters Point, Lower East Side, Columbia Point  
out of sight, out of mind, & when bread riots come  
(conjured by cutting welfare, raising prices)  
the man wont hesitate to raze those ghettos  
& few will see, & fewer will object.

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #60

First Observable Effects of So-Called “Energy Crisis” (Fall 1973)

1. off-shore drilling renewed, Santa Barbara & elsewhere  
we can expect  
new off-shore wells to be opened  
regardless of consequences
2. price of crude oil shoots sky-high, making  
the extraction of shale oil feasible (profitable)  
which shale oil territory has been prepared  
for exploitation by forcing beef prices up, advocating  
beef boycotts, forcing  
smaller ranches toward bankruptcy
3. Peabody Coal plans to occupy Cheyenne land  
on legal grounds they are “incapable”  
of exploiting its “natural resource”, i.e.  
dont wait to extract minerals at the cost  
of all else
4. grim austerity consciousness  
empty shelves & stiff upper lip  
& plenty of hoarding, reminiscent  
of early 40’s, conditioned reflex  
right psychological climate for WW III
5. of course, police & military will have enough gas  
& how will you like  
to be stationary populace in the grip  
of a mobile army?

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #61

Take a good look  
at history (the American myth)  
check sell out  
of revolution by the founding fathers  
“Constitution written by a bunch of gangsters  
to exploit a continent” is what  
Charles Olson told me.  
Check Shay’s rebellion, Aaron Burr, Nathan Hale.  
Who wrote the history books where you  
went to school?  
Check Civil War: maybe industrial north  
needed cheap labor, South had it, how many  
sincere “movement” people  
writers & radicals played  
into their hands?  
Check Haymarket trial: it broke the back  
of strong Wobblie movement: how many jailed, fined,  
killed to stop that one? What’s happening to us  
has happened a few times before  
let’s change the script  
//  
What did it take to stop the Freedom Riders  
What have we actually changed?  
month I was born  
they were killing onion pickers in Ohio  
Month that I write this, nearly 40 years later  
they’re killing UFW’s in the state  
I’m trying somehow to live in. LET’S REWRITE  
the history books.  
History repeats itself  
only if we let it.

## REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #62

check Science: whose interest does it serve?  
whose need to perpetrate  
mechanical dead (exploitable) universe

instead of living cosmos?  
//  
whose dream those hierarchies: planets & stars  
blindly obeying fixed laws, as they desire  
us, too, to stay in place  
whose interest to postulate  
man's recent blind "descent" from "unthinking" animals  
our pitiable geocentric isolation:  
lone voice in the stars  
//  
what point in this cosmology but to drain  
hope of contact or change  
/oppressing us w/"reason"

## **REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #63**

Free Julian Beck  
Free Timothy Leary  
Free seven million starving in Pakistan  
Free all political prisoners  
Free Angela Davis  
Free Soledad brothers  
Free Martin Sobel. . . .'  
Free Sacco & Vanzetti  
Free Big Bill Hayward  
Free Sitting Bull  
Free Crazy Horse  
Free all political prisoners  
Free Billy the Kid  
Free Jesse James  
Free all political prisoners  
Free Nathan Hale  
Free Joan of Arc  
Free Galileo & Bruno & Eckhart  
Free Jesus Christ:  
Free Socrates  
Free all political prisoners  
Free all political prisoners  
All prisoners are political prisoners



Every pot smoker a political prisoner  
Every holdup man a political prisoner  
Every forger a political prisoner  
Every angry kid who smashed a window a political prisoner  
Every whore, pimp, murderer, a political prisoner  
Every pederast, dealer, drunk driver, burglar  
poacher, striker, strike breaker, rapist  
Polar bear at San Francisco zoo, political prisoner  
Ancient wise turtle at Detroit Aquarium, political prisoner  
Flamingoes dying in Phoenix tourist park, political prisoners  
Otters in Tucson Desert Museum, political prisoners  
Elk in Wyoming grazing behind barbed wire, political prisoners  
Prairie dogs poisoned in New Mexico, war casualties  
(Mass grave of Wyoming bald eagles, a battlefield)  
Every kid in school a political prisoner  
Every lawyer in his cubicle a political prisoner  
Every doctor brainwashed by AMA a political prisoner  
Every housewife a political prisoner  
Every teacher lying thru sad teeth a political prisoner  
Every Indian on reservation a political prisoner  
Every black man a political prisoner  
Every faggot hiding in bar a political prisoner  
Every junkie shooting up in John a political prisoner  
Every woman a political prisoner  
Every woman a political prisoner  
You are political prisoner locked in tense body  
You are political prisoner locked in stiff mind  
You are political prisoner locked to your parents  
You are political prisoner locked to your past  
Free yourself  
Free yourself  
I am political prisoner locked in anger habit  
I am political prisoner locked in greed habit  
I am political prisoner locked in fear habit  
I am political prisoner locked in dull senses  
I am political prisoner locked in numb flesh  
Free me  
Free me  
Help to free me  
Free yourself

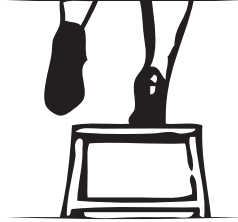
Help to free me  
Free yourself  
Help to free me  
Free Barry Goldwater  
Help to free me  
Free Governor Wallace  
Free President Nixon.  
Free J Edgar Hoover  
Free them;  
Free yourself  
Free them  
Free yourself  
Free yourself  
Free them  
Free yourself  
Help to free me  
Free us  
DANCE  
May 1968-Dec 1971.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Diane di Prima was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1934, a second generation American of Italian descent. Her maternal grandfather, Domenico Mallozzi, was an active anarchist, and associate of Carlo Tresca and Emma Goldman. She began writing at the age of seven, and committed herself to a life as a poet at the age of fourteen. For the past thirty-four years she has lived in northern California, raising five children. In the late '60s she took part in the political activities of the Diggers and is widely considered the most important woman writer of the Beat movement.

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